Outline of the Proposed Synopsis Entitled as

Gender, Tribes and Subaltern Activism: A Critical Study of Mahasweta Devi's Selected Works

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Introduction

A critically acclaimed Bengali writer, journalist and activist, Mahasweta Devi devoted her life for the sake of the indigenous people of India with specific reference to women. Mahasweta Devi's literary work is a compilation of her experiences with the marginalised people. Her literary work consists of over one hundred novels, more than twenty collections of short stories and hundreds of articles. She spent much time with tribes, thus she closely observed the life of marginalised people. This helps her to have a close reading of the misery of marginalised lives. Devi represents the voice of voiceless people through the art of writings. She exposed the oppression and exploitation of the marginalised communities through her literary writing. Major themes of her writings are adivasis, dalits, women, patriarchy, caste hierarchy, moneylenders, bonded labor system, subaltern resistance, historical narrations, social alienation, negligence of government, question of education, naxalism, activism of marginalised people and subjugation of indigenous people of India.

Mahasweta Devi's literary writings emphasis the exploitation of the subaltern and rebellion of the oppressed. Through her writings, she has made female narration a rebellious act. Her representation of women through literary work gives the reader a new kind of perception about marginalised women. Devi focuses much on the women of the marginalised communities, hence, Devi's much of literary works are based on the life and struggle of the women. Devi's first book *Jhansir Rani* (Queen of Jhansi) was published in 1956. The book is a story of the life and struggle of queen of Jhansi. Devi consciously choose a female subject for her first book.

Devi writes historical narratives that reject traditional historiography in favor of folk and myth stories. The written history is contradictory to the actual conditions of the subaltern; hence, Devi considered oral histories more significant, oral history as the part of the collective memory of the marginalised community. Mahasweta Devi condemned the state policies which are made for the welfare of the indigenous people of India. Such state policies made the life of indigenous people more vulnerable. Devi says that the indigenous people of India are the native of this land. They have the first right over India soil, but they have been denied not only the civil rights but also

the human rights. Everything they have is controlled and manipulated by the state policies and brutal politics. These indigenous people have been put outside the developmental framework and always neglected by the so-called mainstream. Therefore, in the 1970s, Devi emerged as the voice of indigenous people, which are the one sixth of the total population of India.

Her works are against patriarchy, social discrimination, exploitation and oppression of the tribals, *dalits* and women. She lived in West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh where she witnessed the brutal life and suffering of women. Her experiences made her explore the voice of oppressed community. She has realised the unrealised beauty of tribes and women. She made a way through her writings for many of us to realise the real condition of tribals and women.

For the purpose of research, I have selected three books of Mahasweta Devi; *Imaginary Maps, Outcast* and *Mahasweta Devi Five Plays*. In *Imaginary Maps*, In the story of *Bonded Labour*, as the name of the story indicates one has to work as a bonded labour. This tradition used to be in colonial India and even could be seen in independent India even though it was banned. The bonded labourer were deprived of all civil rights and had to pay the doubt for many generations. Devi has portrayed the picture of a girl who has been fallen victim of bonded labour. In the short story collection *Outcast* Devi discusses the exploitation of women at the hands of patriarchy and society. Patriarchy could be seen through all societies. Patriarchy not only exploits women but all marginalised ones. Devi discusses how women stand and resist against exploitative society. The specialty of Devi's writing is that it comes from her first-hand experience. Devi's literary writing is more concerned with existing social problems. In *Five Plays*, the five plays are *Mother of 1084, Aajir, Urvashi and Johnny, Bayen and Water*. For most of her writings, Devi has chosen women as a subject of story. These women come from all caste and categories. She may be mother, wife or daughter. These women struggle against exploitation and for their own identities. Devi rejects the traditional role assigned to women in society. Her women protagonists aren't submissive instead they rebel and claim their rights. Instead of seeing them as women Devi sees them as human beings. In the Play *Mother of 1084*, Devi portrays a woman who is a mother and has lost her son. While searching reason behind son's death she searches her own identity and her role in her family. In the search she come to know her rights and slowly frees her of shackles of society. In the same way, in other plays, Devi portrays women at different conditions.

The first two books are collections of short stories and third book is a collection of plays. These books talk about the sufferings of marginalised people. Indian society usually considers women an object of pleasure and entertainment. Patriarchy is deeply rooted in the society. The society accepts and promotes patriarchy which leads to the domination of men over women. Devi describes tribal women as priceless bonded laborer and no one cares to pay for them. A tribal or a dalit woman is seen as useful, as a commodity by the so-called civilised society. Mahasweta Devi explores the brutal conditions of tribal women and also pointed out that women are strong enough to protect themselves. Female protagonists in her short stories such as Bayen, Sujata are nothing but examples of strength and courage.

Mahasweta Devi criticises the common view of society that the tribals are wild animals, culprits and ill-mannered sections of the society. The view of society towards tribals is filled with prejudices. Devi lived with the marginalised communities, tribals and women. She understood their problems an d worked for their betterment. Through her writings, dark side of our society is explored.

Review of literature

Many Scholars have discovered different aspects of the short stories of Devi. The fictional world of Devi visits the problems of subaltern history and the politics of decolonisation. There is scope to understand gender roles of tribal women in the writings of Devi. The female narration as protagonist in the short stories of Mahasweta Devi will help us understand the tribal women and their role in society.

Limitation of Research

The proposed research aims at the analysis of the short stories by Mahasweta Devi and adds a critical perspective to her writing. Many scholars and researchers have interpreted the work of Mahasweta Devi in various ways. This study is concerned with the images of females in Devi's writing

Literature Survey

Primary source -

The primary source of the proposed research topic is *Imaginary Maps*, *Outcast* and *Mahasweta Devi Five Plays* by Mahasweta Devi.

Secondary sources

The secondary sources to be used for this research topic are journals and books which are related with the study and useful for analysing different aspects of the stories.

Hypothesis

Imaginary Maps, *Outcast* and *Mahasweta Devi Five Plays* by Mahasweta Devi will give a way to discover the sufferings of voiceless people. It is useful in demonstrating women as bold and tough as men. It helps to depict the misery of the life of indigenous people.

Aims and Objectives

1. To find out the status of women in marginalised community.
2. To discover the harsh realities of the tribal and women.
3. Understanding the different perspective of the society towards tribal and marginalised women.
4. To understand the way of livelihood, mindset of the tribal.
5. To review the feminist approach through the short stories.
6. To identify loopholes deeply rooted in the society about marginalised women and tribe.
7. To understand the resistance and activism of marginalised people.

Relevance of Research

History tells us that woman is considered as the object of pleasure in the patriarchal society. She is inferior to men. Society has brought drastic changes by achieving advancement in science and technology but society could not able to bring the same changes in the society to look towards tribal and women. This study will give a new understanding of tribal people and help us to change the stereotypes about the tribes.

Research methodology

The proposed research topic will follow basic method of research. It will analyses the primary as well as secondary sources. Descriptive and analytical method will be applied critically to the research work.

Conclusion

Mahasweta Devi worked not only for the empowerment of tribal but also for the marginalised women. Female protagonists of the short stories are courageous, brave and bold. They proved that women can also fight for their rights. Society has brought major changes in the status of women but many sections of the society still need changes to empower tribal and women. They must be treated equally not only on records but in real world. They must be given respect regardless of their caste, class and gender. This research studies the literary works of Devi and interprets the literary works critically. Devi worked for the sake of marginalised people through her active participation in social works. She herself identifies as activist first and then the writer.

Tentative Chapter scheme:

Chapter I: Introduction

The chapter will briefly examine the writings of Mahasweta Devi and its critical analysis by different critics. It will discuss the background to the proposed topic.

Chapter II: Tribe and Subaltern in Mahasweta Devi's Writings

In this chapter, general ideas about gender and tribes will be discussed with the help of literary text of Mahasweta Devi and critical works of other writers concerning Mahasweta Devi writing will be studied thoroughly.

Chapter III: Caste, Class and Gender in Mahasweta Devi's Writings

Representation of females characters will be discussed in this chapter. It is a critical analysis of the states of their livelihood.

Chapter IV: Female Protagonism: Struggle for Existence in Mahasweta Devi's Writings

Female protagonist and their resistance will be discussed in this chapter. It will deal with how female protagonists of Mahasweta Devi fight with the tough situation as women are considered to be a sign of weakness.

Chapter V: Conclusion

The relation between gender and tribal female protagonist will be discussed with reference to the *Imaginary Maps, Outcast* and *Mahasweta Devi Five Plays*. This concluding chapter will analyse and interpret the research study. In this chapter research work will be critically interpret.

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